



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MEXICO A CENTRAL AMERICAN STATE.

BY

H. E. THE MINISTER OF THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC.

There is in this City a social gathering of ladies and gentlemen called "The Travellers' Club," meeting weekly during the winter of each year, for the purpose of studying a foreign country, on the supposition that its members are then travelling in that particular country, and with that view papers are read referring to the same, and they are illustrated with an exhibition of views and objects manufactured in the country under study, and of everything else that may contribute to impart a more or less complete information regarding the place supposed to be visited.

During the winter 1887-88 Mexico was chosen as the country under study by the Club, and for that reason I received at the beginning of the year 1888 an invitation to attend some of its sessions, and to say something about the Republic. I accepted the invitation to attend some session, but stated to the invitation committee that, not having time to prepare a paper, I would only give some general notions on Mexico, in a conversational form, and would be glad to answer any question that might be put to me by those attending the meeting who felt the desire to have further information and more details.

Accordingly, the evening of the 16th January, 1888,

I attended the meeting of the Club and spoke for about an hour on the geographical position of Mexico, its physical conditions, its natural resources and other matters connected with the situation of the country, but carefully avoiding to touch any political question, especially of an international character.

With a view to leave a record of what I intended to say, I had with me a stenographer to take down what I would say, and although his notes were not complete, by using them, and those taken by reporters, some extracts of my conversation were prepared and published the next morning.

Speaking of the geographical position of Mexico, I naturally stated what is a fact, although not generally realized, that while the main portion of the territory of Mexico is located in North America it occupies a considerable portion of Central America, although politically it is considered as wholly situated in North America. On this subject I made the following remarks taken from the newspapers, but which were correct :

“ The Isthmus of Panama divides the New World into two continents, one situated on the northern and the other on the southern hemisphere, but as the position of that isthmus does not correspond with the line of the equator, and lies considerably north of that line, a large portion of South America proper lies in the boreal hemisphere. North America proper is divided by the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in two subdivisions—Central America from Panama to Tehuantepec, and North America from Tehuantepec to the North Pole.

“ Central America in its present political organization includes the following States: Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, but from a geographical standpoint it has a much larger area, since it begins at the Isthmus of Panama and ends in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Taking this view, Mexico exercises sovereignty over a large portion of Central America, larger still than any single State of the five which are generally considered as the only components of the same, and representing a third of the total territorial area of Central America.

“ The Mexican States of Chiapas and a part of Oaxaca, on the Pacific ; of

Yucatan, Campeche and Tabasco and a portion of the State of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico, are situated in geographical Central America.

"The following résumé of the territorial area and population of the several sections of Central America, taken from the 'Statesman's Year Book, London, 1887,' shows that Mexico is a Central American as well as a North American power:

FIVE STATES OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

	Area in sq. miles.	Population.
Guatemala.....	46,800	1,224,602
Salvador.....	7,225	634,120
Honduras.....	46,400	458,000
Nicaragua.....	49,500	275,815
Costa Rica.....	23,200	213,785
Total.....	<u>173,125</u>	<u>2,806,322</u>

MEXICO.

State.	Area in sq. miles.	Population.
Chiapas.....	16,048	242,029
Oaxaca (computed in its fifth part)....	6,718	152,255
Yucatan.....	29,567	302,319
Campeche.....	25,832	90,413
Tabasco.....	11,815	140,747
Vera Cruz (computed in its fourth part)..	6,558	145,610
Total.....	<u>96,538</u>	<u>1,073,373</u>

This shows that 36% of the total area of Central America belongs to Mexico."*

When those statements were translated into Spanish and published by "Las Novedades," of New York, in its issue of the 18th January, 1888, they were read by Señor Don Manuel Montufar, Secretary of the Guatemalan Legation in Washington, who, in the absence of the Minister, Señor Don Francisco Lainfiesta, was acting

* In the foregoing list I omitted to take into account that, besides the States referred to, there are in Central America proper the British Colony of Belize or British Honduras and that part of the State of Panama, in Colombia, which lies north of the Isthmus of Panama.

Taking the area and population of those places from the statistical and geographical data published by the Almanach de Gotha for 1893 and from some

as Chargé d'Affaires, and he considered my statements in this connection as a geographical heresy, and as an evidence of the design of Mexico against the several States of Central America. His alarm was so great that he called the attention of the other representatives of the Central American States in Washington

official information in possession of Señor Doctor Don Manuel M. de Peralta, Costa Rican Minister to Washington, a gentleman very well versed in Central American affairs, the following results are obtained:

	Area in square miles.	Area in square kilometers.	Population.
Chiapas	16,048	41,565	270,000
Oaxaca (one-fifth).	6,718	17,400	158,800
Yucatan	29,567	76,579	330,000
Campeche.	25,832	66,905	94,000
Tabasco.	11,815	30,600	140,747
Vera Cruz (one-fourth). . .	6,558	16,986	181,000
	<u>96,538</u>	<u>250,035</u>	<u>1,174,547</u>
Guatemala.	48,300	125,100	1,520,000
Honduras	46,262	119,820	400,000
Salvador	8,135	21,070	800,000
Nicaragua	47,857	123,950	320,000
Costa Rica.	24,000	62,000	270,000
Panama (two-thirds). . .	19,278	50,000	200,000
British Honduras.	8,300	21,475	31,500
	<u>202,132</u>	<u>523,415</u>	<u>3,541,500</u>

GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENSION OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

	Square miles.	Square kilometers.
Mexican Central America.....	96,538	250,035
Five Republics of Central America.....	174,554	451,940
British Honduras.....	8,300	21,475
Panama (two-thirds).....	19,278	50,000
	<u>298,670</u>	<u>773,450</u>

The foregoing table shows that a little more than 32 per cent. of the whole of Central America, geographically speaking, belongs to Mexico.

to this incident in order to point out to them the serious dangers which he foresaw for their respective countries on account of my views, which he considered as more than extraordinary.

Fortunately, one of them, the representative of Costa Rica, Señor Doctor Don Manuel M. de Peralta, had attended the meeting of the Travellers' Club at which I spoke, and, I think, Doctor Don Horacio Guzman, the Nicaraguan Minister, was also present, although I am not sure of this, and both failed to see anything in what I stated in this connection that was not a geographical fact, and that, consequently, it could not be disputed; and therefore this incident, that threatened to assume certain proportions, died in its very cradle.

Señor Montufar showed himself over-sensitive at my remarks when there was not the slightest ground for such feeling. If I had made a geographical mistake, in averring that a portion of the territory of Mexico was in Central America, geographically speaking, I would be the only sufferer by my mistake, because I would have been the laughing-stock of everybody, including the school-boy studying geography; and, on the contrary, if I had stated a fact, nobody had reason to complain, and much less to be alarmed.

My object in now mentioning this incident is to show the extreme sensitiveness of some Guatemalan gentlemen in regard to Mexico, which goes so far that they cannot listen sometimes to indisputable facts without umbrage, and without ascribing it to purposes and designs against their country. Fortunately this incident happened when the long-pending boundary dispute between Mexico and Guatemala had already been settled

for several years, as had it taken place before, when that question was opened, the situation would have been still more embarrassing and unpleasant.

WASHINGTON, December 29th, 1893.

M. ROMERO.